RENTROCKET

Call for Python developers
RentRocket green rental housing website

Project details:

We are seeking a Python developer to continue the development of RentRocket.org, a prototype green rental housing website that encourages users to consider sustainability factors when making rental housing decisions. The site launched in early 2015, and development will continue through September 30, 2015, when current funding will expire.

The RentRocket website homepage is here. The page for Bloomington, Indiana is the most developed to-date, so please use this page for reference.

For additional information, please contact bauerj@bloomington.in.gov. **Expressions of interest due by July 1, 2015**.

Project Background:

Cities across the country, particularly college communities, face challenges in meeting energy, climate change, and general sustainability goals because of a split incentive problem and a data deficit regarding rental housing.

Renters pay utility bills, but lack the knowledge or ability to make major efficiency investments in properties they do not own. Landlords could invest in the energy efficiency of their properties but often lack an incentive to make them because they do not pay the utility bills. If landlords paid the utility bills, renters would lack any incentive to change their behavior. This is the *split incentive problem*.

The *data deficit* refers to renters' lack information about and/or interest in utility bills, recycling availability, and access to active transportation when they search for housing. Landlords lack information about energy and resource consumption at their properties because utility bills are usually in the tenant's name.

The end result is that landlords fail to perceive sustainability investments as a need because renters fail to consider or articulate them as an important factor in housing decisions.

In 2013, a group of 14 cities began working together with support from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network and the Global Philanthropy Partnership with the aim of improving the information and tools available to both renters and landlords.

To satisfy both the general desire by students for better housing information, and the desire of partner cities to make sustainability information more accessible to both renters and landlords, RentRocket.org was born. This tool includes basic rental information (# of bedrooms and bathrooms, availability of laundry facilities, monthly rent, etc.) and sustainability-related

information (energy and water bills, availability of recycling services, access to public transit and bike facilities, etc.).

RentRocket is written using Django, a Python based web framework. The site is hosted on Google's App Engine and uses a MySQL database for storage. Various javascript libraries are also used for richer client side interaction. The source code is made under the open source GPL license, and further contributions will be released under that license. The code is published using GitHub, and more information about the technical aspects of the project are available there:

https://github.com/City-of-Bloomington/green-rental

Draft scope of work:

The selected developer will work as an independent contractor to continue building out the RentRocket.org website. Tasks will include:

- Working with five focus cities (Ann Arbor, MI; Bloomington, IN; Burlington, VT; Columbia, MO; Evanston, IL) to determine and act on priorities for continued site development
- Developing and implementing tools for uploading bulk rental and energy use data from Columbia, MO and Burlington, VT
- Integrating separately coded design elements into the site
- Finalizing and implementing search and filtering functions
- Enabling the upload of rental listings by landlords

To express interest:
Submit a resume and cover letter/email (including approximate hourly rate) to bauerj@bloomington.in.gov by July 1.